

REGION 6 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

TOPIC: Chamizal Neighborhood, El Paso, Texas

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PURPOSE/ACTION NEEDED: ECOS Hot Issues “Environmental equity – getting to know our communities and recognize disparities”

DEADLINE DATE: 3/10/2021

BACKGROUND/CURRENT STATUS:

Chamizal Neighborhood is one of oldest and poorest neighborhoods located in South Central El Paso, Texas. Chamizal Neighborhood is roughly $\frac{3}{4}$ of a square mile in size predominantly residential neighborhood with a mix of light to heavy commercial businesses. The International Bridge of Americas, adjacent to Chamizal neighborhood, is one of the busiest international crossing along the U.S./Mexico border adding to the traffic in and around the neighborhood. Neighborhood facilities include three elementary schools, a high school, churches, and not for profit buildings. There is also a mix of single family and multifamily housing that include two housing complexes with a two-year waitlist operated by the housing authority. There are approximately 7,000 residents which are 97% Hispanic, and 89% below the national median household income with an average annual income is \$8,000 per year. There is no city operated public facilities, libraries, recreation centers or senior centers.

ENVIRONMENTAL/PUBLIC HEALTH CONCERNS:

Elementary school children in El Paso have a higher incidence of asthma and allergies than U.S. average. In 2016 residents requested that El Paso Independent School District (EPISD) conduct environmental analysis at elementary schools. Soil testing conducted by UTEP at 4 locations revealed potentially dangerous lead level at two schools as well as high copper concentrations at the housing authority playground. EPISD replaced topsoil at Zavala elementary playground and added new soil to Douglas elementary playground. In March 2017 residents demanded EPISD perform a more comprehensive environment and health analysis and cleanup plan with community input. No air pollution or traffic studies have been performed.

TECHNICAL CONCERNS:

- Chamizal Neighborhood presented their concerns during the Public Comment session at the U.S/Mexico Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) in May 2018, and in November 2019.
- During the JAC 79th meeting held on February 2021, Cemelli de Aztlan voiced concerns with pollution challenges in the Chamizal neighborhood and regarding the Marathon Petroleum refinery permit.
- 2015 Traffic Study showed 2015 Traffic volumes on E. Paisano ranged from 22,000 to 29,000 vehicles per day. Volumes are expected to grow between 28,000 to 36,000 per day by 2025.
- Truck traffic leading onto the Bridge of the Americas, includes dozens of trucks queuing in front of Bowie High school during the afternoon and night.
- 2016 Toxic Tours created by residents to try and engage City of El Paso, Metropolitan Organizations, and TCEQ to assist with a solution to problems created by uncontrolled truck traffic through residential areas.

REGULATORY/LEGAL REQUIREMENTS:

- Bowie High School is within the El Paso Maintenance Area for Carbon Monoxide (CO). A portion of East El Paso just east of downtown along U.S/Mexico border was determined to be in violation of the NAAQS for Carbon Monoxide. Texas was required to adopt revision to its SIP to address major CO sources and to bring area CO levels into attainment within NAAQS. The Maintenance Plans is to continue until 2028.

COMMUNITY CONCERNS:

- Chamizal's People for Power presented their concerns at the February 2020 NEJAC meeting in Jacksonville, Florida.
- Residents concerned with over-grown weeds, litter, and damaged gates at Franklin Canal.
- In 2018, a Title IV complaint against DOT, HHS, DOJ and Education Department, regarding EPISD's actions to relocate the central Bus and Operation HUB bringing over 125 buses, maintenance garage and fueling station to Bowie High School resulted in disparate impacts to students at Bowie High School and nearby Chamizal residents including harmful air pollution and traffic based on race and national origin.
- EPISD did not consider the cost of moving the Central Hub to any other location.
- New Bus Hub is half mile radius from Bowie High School, Douglas Elementary and both housing projects.
- Requested guidance on the public comment process for the extension of the 10-year permit, accountability of data analysis and reporting from Marathon Petroleum.
- Expressed concerns with ozone levels and put forward an outreach initiative with the schools on air quality education with the objective to protect children when the peak ozone levels are high.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Recommend a PM Hot Spot analysis to identify the levels of localized concentrations. Determine if Urban Waters Program can assist with flooding issues with Franklin Canal.
- Ask Texas Department of Transportation to keep informing the Chamizal Neighborhood and Schools in the area on advancement of the 1-10 connect project with the I-110 that would eliminate commercial trucks and private owned vehicles to drive thru the Chamizal neighborhood in their southbound way to the Port of Entry.
- TCEQ is inviting Marathon Petroleum to speak at the JAC Public meeting joined by a TCEQ Staff person.